



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P  
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. PF22-3-000; Docket No. PF22-4-000]

Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC; Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC;  
Notice of Scoping Period Requesting Comments on Environmental Issues for the Planned  
Virginia Reliability Project and Commonwealth Energy Connector Project,  
and Notice of Public Scoping Session

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental document that will discuss the environmental impacts of the Virginia Reliability Project and Commonwealth Energy Connector Project involving construction and operation of facilities by Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC (Columbia) and Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC (Transco), respectively. Columbia's project would be located in Greensville, Prince George, Sussex, Surry, Southampton, and Isle of Wight Counties, Virginia and in the cities of Suffolk and Chesapeake, Virginia. Transco's project would be located in Mecklenburg, Brunswick, and Greensville Counties, Virginia. Because of planned operational connections between the Virginia Reliability Project and the Commonwealth Energy Connector Project, the Commission will prepare a single environmental document as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. The Commission will use this environmental document in its decision-making process to determine whether the projects are in the public convenience and necessity.

This notice announces the opening of the scoping process the Commission will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies regarding the projects. As part of the NEPA review process, the Commission takes into account concerns the public may have about proposals and the environmental impacts that could result from its action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. This gathering of public input is referred to as "scoping." The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis in the environmental document on the important environmental issues. Additional information about the Commission's NEPA process is described below in the NEPA Process and Environmental Document section of this notice.

By this notice, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of issues to address in the environmental document. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please submit your comments so that the Commission receives them in Washington, DC on or before 5:00 pm Eastern Time on March 24, 2022. Comments may be submitted in written or oral form. Further details on how to submit comments are provided in the Public Participation section of this notice.

Your comments should focus on the potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. Your input will help the Commission staff determine what issues they need to evaluate in the environmental document. Commission staff will consider all written or oral comments during the preparation of the environmental document.

If you submitted comments on either of these projects to the Commission **before** the opening of the dockets on December 1, 2021, you will need to file those comments in Docket Nos. PF22-3-000 (Virginia Reliability Project) or PF22-4-000 (Commonwealth Energy Connector Project) to ensure they are considered.

This notice is being sent to the Commission's current environmental mailing list for these projects. State and local government representatives should notify their constituents of these planned projects and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, a representative from Columbia or Transco may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the planned facilities. The company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable easement agreement. You are not required to enter into an agreement. However, if the Commission approves the project, the Natural Gas Act conveys the right of eminent domain to the company. Therefore, if you and the company do not reach an easement agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings in court. In such instances, compensation would be determined by a judge in accordance with state law. The Commission does not subsequently grant, exercise, or oversee the exercise of that eminent domain authority. The courts have exclusive authority to handle eminent domain cases; the Commission has no jurisdiction over these matters.

A fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled "An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?" addresses typically asked questions, including the use of eminent domain and how to participate in the Commission's proceedings. This fact sheet along with other landowner topics of interest are available for viewing on the FERC website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) under the links to Natural Gas Questions or Landowner Topics.

### **Public Participation**

There are four methods you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. Please carefully follow these instructions so that your comments are properly recorded. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has staff available to assist you at (866) 208-3676 or [FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov).

- 1) You can file your comments electronically using the eComment feature, which is located on the Commission's website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) under the link to FERC Online. Using eComment is an easy method for submitting brief, text-only comments on a project;

- 2) You can file your comments electronically by using the eFiling feature, which is located on the Commission's website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) under the link to FERC Online. With eFiling, you can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on "eRegister." You will be asked to select the type of filing you are making; a comment on a particular project is considered a "Comment on a Filing," or
- 3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the Commission. Be sure to reference the project docket number (PF22-3-000 for Virginia Reliability Project or PF22-4-000 for Commonwealth Energy Connector Project) on your letter. Submissions sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be addressed to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. Submissions sent via any other carrier must be addressed to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852.
- 4) In lieu of sending written comments, the Commission invites you to attend the virtual public scoping session its staff will conduct by telephone, scheduled as follows:

Date and Time
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm Call in number: 800-779-8625 Passcode: 3472916

Although there will not be a formal presentation, Commission staff will be available to answer questions you may have about the environmental review process. The primary goal of this scoping session is to have you identify the specific environmental issues and concerns that should be considered in the environmental document. Individual oral comments will be taken on a one-on-one basis with a court reporter present on the line. This format is designed to receive the maximum amount of oral comments, in a convenient way during the timeframe allotted, and is in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The scoping session is scheduled from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm eastern time. You may call at any time after 5:00pm at which time you will be placed on mute and hold. Calls will be answered in the order they are received. Once answered, you will have the opportunity to provide your comment directly to a court reporter with FERC staff or representative present on the line. A time limit of three minutes will be implemented for each commentor.

Transcripts of all comments received during the scoping session will be

publicly available on FERC's eLibrary system (see the last page of this notice for instructions on using eLibrary).

**It is important to note that the Commission provides equal consideration to all comments received, whether filed in written form or provided orally at a virtual scoping session.**

Additionally, the Commission offers a free service called eSubscription, which makes it easy to stay informed of all issuances and submittals regarding the dockets/projects to which you subscribe. These instant email notifications are the fastest way to receive notification and provide a link to the document files which can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings. Go to <https://www.ferc.gov/ferc-online/overview> to register for eSubscription.

### **Summary of the Planned Projects**

#### **Virginia Reliability Project**

Columbia plans to replace and expand existing facilities associated with its VM-107 and VM-108 pipelines in southeast Virginia. The Virginia Reliability Project would increase the capability of Columbia's existing pipeline facilities to provide incremental firm transportation service of 100,000 dekatherms per day (Dth/d), while increasing the reliability of Columbia's system by replacing 1950s vintage pipeline. According to Columbia, its project would meet the increasing market demand of residential, commercial, and industrial consumers in southeast Virginia.

The Virginia Reliability Project would consist of the following:

- replacement of approximately 47.7 miles of existing, 1950s vintage 12-inch-diameter VM-107 and VM-108 pipelines with 24-inch-diameter pipeline mostly within Columbia's existing right-of-way, in the Counties of Sussex, Surry, Southampton, and Isle of Wight, as well as the cities of Suffolk and Chesapeake, Virginia;
- installation of one new 5,500 horsepower (HP) electric-drive compressor unit at the existing Emporia Compressor Station in Greensville County, Virginia;
- a facility upgrade involving additional gas cooling and an increase of 2,700 HP at the existing Petersburg Compressor Station in Prince George County, Virginia;
- expansion of the Emporia Point of Receipt in Greensville County, Virginia; RS-7423 Regulator Station in Prince George County, Virginia; and the MS-831010 Point of Delivery in the City of Chesapeake, Virginia; and
- eight mainline valve replacements, five new launcher/receiver installations, and other minor appurtenant facilities.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 1.<sup>1</sup>

## **Commonwealth Energy Connector Project**

Transco plans to expand its existing natural gas transmission system to provide 105,000 Dth/d of incremental firm transportation capacity from its Compressor Station 165 in Pittsylvania County, Virginia to the existing Emporia delivery point in Greensville County, Virginia on the existing South Virginia Lateral B-Line Pipeline.

The Commonwealth Energy Connector Project would consist of the following:

- construction of a 6.35-mile-long, 24-inch-diameter pipeline loop<sup>2</sup> (referred to as the Commonwealth Loop), including valve and launcher/receiver facilities, in Brunswick and Greensville Counties, Virginia;
- installation of a 30,500 HP electric motor-drive compressor unit at the existing Compressor Station 168 in Mecklenburg County, Virginia; and
- expansion of the existing Emporia Metering and Regulator Station in Greensville County, Virginia.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 1.

## **Land Requirements for Construction**

### **Virginia Reliability Project**

As a preliminary estimate, construction of the planned facilities for the Virginia Reliability Project would disturb about 814 acres of land for the aboveground facilities and the pipeline. Following construction, Columbia would maintain about 195 acres for permanent operation of the project's facilities; the remaining acreage would be restored. These acreages are subject to change pending further pipeline route refinement. All of the planned pipeline route parallels Columbia's existing VM-107 and VM-108 pipelines.

### **Commonwealth Energy Connector Project**

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<sup>1</sup> The appendices referenced in this notice will not appear in the Federal Register. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail and are available at [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov) using the link called "eLibrary." For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice. At this time, the Commission has suspended access to the Commission's Public Reference Room due to the proclamation declaring a National Emergency concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), issued by the President on March 13, 2020. For assistance, contact FERC at [FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov) or call toll free, (886) 208-3676 or TTY (202) 502-8659.

<sup>2</sup> A pipeline loop is a segment of pipe constructed parallel to an existing pipeline to increase capacity.

Construction of the planned facilities for the Commonwealth Energy Connector would disturb about 168 acres of land for the compressor station modifications and the pipeline. An additional amount, as yet to be quantified, would be disturbed for aboveground facilities. Following construction, Transco would maintain about 2.8 acres of new pipeline right-of-way for permanent operation of the project's facilities; the remaining acreage is either part of its existing permanent right-of-way or would be restored. The acreage that would be permanently affected by aboveground facilities outside of Transco's existing facilities has yet to be quantified. All of the planned pipeline route parallels Transco's existing South Virginia Lateral A-Line.

### **NEPA Process and the Environmental Document**

Any environmental document issued by Commission staff will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the planned projects under the relevant general resource areas:

- geology and soils;
- water resources and wetlands;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- threatened and endangered species;
- cultural resources;
- socioeconomics and environmental justice;
- land use;
- air quality and noise;
- climate change; and
- reliability and safety.

Commission staff have already identified several issues that deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the planned facilities and the environmental information provided by Columbia and Transco for their respective projects. This preliminary list of issues may change based on your comments and our analysis:

- lands administered by the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge;
- the Sunray Historic District in the city of Chesapeake, Virginia; and
- residential, commercial, and industrial areas;
- agricultural lands;
- wetlands and waterbodies; and
- forested areas.

Commission staff will also evaluate reasonable alternatives to the planned projects or portions of the projects and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas. Your comments will help Commission staff identify and focus on the issues that might have an effect on the human environment and potentially eliminate others from further study and discussion in the environmental document.

Although no formal application has been filed for either project, Commission staff have already initiated a NEPA review under the Commission's pre-filing process. The

purpose of the pre-filing process is to encourage early involvement of interested stakeholders and to identify and resolve issues before the Commission receives an application. As part of the pre-filing review, Commission staff will contact federal and state agencies to discuss their involvement in the scoping process and the preparation of the environmental document.

If formal applications are filed, Commission staff will then determine whether to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EA or the EIS will present Commission staff's independent analysis of the environmental issues. If Commission staff prepares an EA, a *Notice of Schedule for the Preparation of an Environmental Assessment* will be issued. The EA may be issued for an allotted public comment period. The Commission would consider timely comments on the EA before making its determination on the proposed projects. If Commission staff prepares an EIS, a *Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS/Notice of Schedule* will be issued once the applications are filed, which will open an additional public comment period. Staff will then prepare a draft EIS that will be issued for public comment. Commission staff will consider all timely comments received during the comment period on the draft EIS, and revise the document, as necessary, before issuing a final EIS. Any EA or draft and final EIS will be available in electronic format in the public record through eLibrary<sup>3</sup> and the Commission's natural gas environmental documents webpage (<https://www.ferc.gov/industries-data/natural-gas/environment/environmental-documents>). If eSubscribed, you will receive instant email notification when the environmental document is issued.

With this notice, the Commission is asking agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues related to these projects to formally cooperate in the preparation of the environmental document.<sup>4</sup> Agencies that would like to request cooperating agency status should follow the instructions for filing comments provided under the Public Participation section of this notice.

### **Consultation Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act**

In accordance with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's implementing regulations for section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Commission is using this notice to initiate consultation with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and to solicit its views and those of other government agencies, interested Indian tribes, and the public on the projects' potential effects on historic properties.<sup>5</sup> The environmental document for these projects will document our findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under section 106.

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<sup>3</sup> For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

<sup>4</sup> The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating agency responsibilities are at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1501.8.

<sup>5</sup> The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800. Those regulations define historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

## **Environmental Mailing List**

The environmental mailing list includes federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties. This list also includes all affected landowners (as defined in the Commission's regulations) who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for project purposes, or who own homes within certain distances of aboveground facilities, and anyone who submits comments on the projects and includes a mailing address with their comments. Commission staff will update the environmental mailing list as the analysis proceeds to ensure that Commission notices related to this environmental review are sent to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the planned projects.

**If you need to make changes to your name/address, or if you would like to remove your name from the mailing list, please complete one of the following steps:**

- 1) Send an email to GasProjectAddressChange@ferc.gov stating your request. You must include the docket number PF22-03-000 for Virginia Reliability Project or PF22-04-000 for Commonwealth Energy Connector Project in your request. If you are requesting a change to your address, please be sure to include your name and the correct address. If you are requesting to delete your address from the mailing list, please include your name and address as it appeared on this notice. **This e-mail address is unable to accept comments.**

**OR**

- 2) Return the attached "Mailing List Update Form" (appendix 2).

## **Becoming an Intervenor**

Once Columbia and Transco file their applications with the Commission, you may want to become an "intervenor" which is an official party to the Commission's proceeding. Only intervenors have the right to seek rehearing of the Commission's decision and be heard by the courts if they choose to appeal the Commission's final ruling. An intervenor formally participates in the proceeding by filing a request to intervene pursuant to Rule 214 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedures (18 CFR 385.214). Motions to intervene are more fully described at <https://www.ferc.gov/resources/guides/how-to.asp>. Please note that the Commission will not accept requests for intervenor status at this time. You must wait until the Commission receives formal applications for the projects, after which the Commission will issue a public notice that establishes an intervention deadline.

## **Additional Information**



Additional information about the projects is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs, at **(866) 208-FERC**, or on the FERC website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on "General Search" and enter the docket number in the "Docket Number" field. Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at [FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov) or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of all formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

Public sessions or site visits will be posted on the Commission's calendar located at <https://www.ferc.gov/news-events/events> along with other related information.

Dated: February 22, 2022.

Debbie-Anne A. Reese,  
Deputy Secretary.